

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 remain in this application.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-8 and 10-16 under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable (obvious) over Friedman (U.S. Patent No. 6,593,845) in view of Heinrich (U.S. Patent No. 5,850,181). Claim 9 is rejected under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Friedman in view of Vega (U.S. Patent No. 6,282,407). Both Friedman and Vega were filed before and issued after the present application's filing date. See 35 U.S.C. §102(e).

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Common Ownership Statement

The above rejections are respectfully traversed because the **present application and Friedman were, at the time the invention of the present application was made, owned by the assignee of the present application.** See MPEP §706.02(I)(2) (on establishing common ownership). In view of the above statements and pursuant to MPEP §706.02(I)(2), Friedman should now be disqualified as prior art. See also 35 U.S.C. §§102(e) and 103(c). Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of the present application are now allowable.

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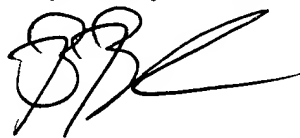
Lastly, if rejections based on Vega and/or any other references made of record are still maintained by the Examiner, the Applicants respectfully reserve the right to present additional arguments and/or investigate, and possibly overcome the cited reference(s), by affidavits or declarations under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.131 or 1.132, by continuation application, or by any other means.

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In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-16 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested, and a timely Notice of Allowability is solicited. If it would be helpful to placing this application in condition for allowance, the Applicants encourage the Examiner to contact the undersigned counsel and conduct a telephonic interview.

While the Applicants believe that no fees are due in connection with the filing of this paper, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in the fees, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0639.

Respectfully submitted,



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